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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

275th meeting

Friday, 28 April 2006, 3 p.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Oh Joon ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

Report of the Disarmament Commission to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session

The Chairman: The draft report of the Commission is contained in documents A/CN.10/2006/CRP.5 to CRP.7. These documents have been circulated in English.

In accordance with our agreed working timetable, we will first consider and adopt the report of the Commission and will thereafter hear concluding statements by delegations. To start the process with the consideration and adoption of the reports of the subsidiary bodies on individual agenda items, I shall call on the Chairmen of the two Working Groups to introduce their respective reports. I first give the floor to the chairman of Working Group I, on agenda item 4, entitled "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", to introduce the report of that Working Group (A/CN.10/2006/CRP.6/Rev.1).

Mr. Zinsou (Benin), Chairman of Working Group I (*spoke in French*): The mandate of Working Group I is to deal with agenda item 4, entitled "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons". Between 18 and 28 April 2006, the Working Group held seven meetings under my chairmanship. I also conducted a number of consultative meetings. The Working Group had before it more than a dozen documents, which are listed in paragraph 2 of the report which it is my honour to introduce to the Commission.

Two meetings were set aside for a general exchange of views, which proved to be frank and particularly detailed. At the third meeting, delegations put forward working papers, which were commented on by the Working Group. At the fourth meeting, the Chairman introduced a working paper entitled "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons". This document drew comment from delegations at the fourth meeting. The Chairman also submitted another document in the form of a conference room paper. Delegations put forward proposals of their own on that document at the fifth meeting, and the Chairman then introduced a revised version of both of these documents at the sixth meeting. He also submitted a third conference room paper, entitled "Draft outline", as document A/CN.10/2006/WG.I/CRP.7.

The Chairman's papers were introduced without prejudging what positions delegations might take and on his responsibility alone. No negotiation was possible on those documents; they did not enjoy consensus. Some delegations lodged reservations as to some subjects in these documents. At the seventh meeting, the Working Group considered and adopted its report on agenda item 4. A decision was also taken to forward the documents set listed in paragraph 2 of the report to the Commission at its 2007 session.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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It should be recalled that on 17 April 2006 that the Commission on Disarmament decided to elect me to the chairmanship of Working Group I with the assent of all Member States. In shouldering that responsibility, keen as I was to salvage a situation embarrassing to all regional groups, I had no doubt as to the complexity of the job awaiting me.

The Working Group, the very day after my election, got down to work. I must stress here that the procedural report that I have just introduced says nothing about a very complex issue that took up a great deal of our time in deliberation. A large majority of the Working Group members reaffirmed the intrinsic link between nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and spelled out a number of general principles suitable as guidelines for action by the international community to attain those goals. A number of speakers stressed that nuclear disarmament must go hand in hand with preventing proliferation in all its forms, and that nuclear disarmament must involve gradual and balanced reductions in arsenals while maintaining worldwide strategic stability and undiminished security for all.

A number of delegations stressed that multilateralism is a cardinal principle in this sphere. The report sets forth in bold relief the new threats that have emerged over recent decades and calls for stepped-up, non-discriminatory and non-selective cooperation, among Member States to counter real or alleged attempts to acquire nuclear weapons, in the context of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

A number of speakers emphasized the need not to ignore long-standing threats continuing to weigh over the future of humankind. A number of delegations put forward, in writing or orally, proposals for specific steps to be taken to attain the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

All in all, delegations gave exploratory consideration to a variety of issues bearing on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Working Group thus covered a vast range of ideas on how to take stock of progress in this sphere and on proposed recommendations that could be considered by the Working Group as it sought to do its job.

On the request of members of the Working Group, I put forward a summary of proposals made to get the nuclear disarmament process started again and to effectively prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. This summary set of recommendations is reflected in the working paper A/CN.10/2006/WG I/WP.4, which is available in all official languages. The major issues broached in this document bear on the following issues: general principles for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and recommendations dealing with nuclear disarmament, security assurances, the role of the Disarmament Conference, the framework for achieving nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, nuclear testing, nuclear weapon-free zones, and guarantees of the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

I also submitted an outline of the deliberations on these issues as well as a document listing all the issues examined in the aforementioned categories. Contrary to established tradition within this Commission, for reasons of their own and pursuant to the consensus rule, some delegations were opposed to having the three documents submitted by the Chairman annexed to the report that I have just introduced. That is why this report confines itself to the procedural aspects of our work without indicating any of the substance of our deliberations. I believe that I have to some extent compensated for this major constraint. This situation hardly does justice to the tireless efforts of the Chairman and by some delegations which demonstrated great flexibility throughout our work.

However, I invite all disarmament experts to continue to reflect on the issues before us. These issues must be gone into in greater depth in the informal consultations that will take place between the end of this session and the next session in 2007 in order to further develop these ideas and to bring about consensus on proposals that may contribute to eliminating the threat to mankind still posed by nuclear arsenals and to preventing nuclear proliferation in all its aspects.

My country, Benin, is a member of the group of the least developed countries, and, as such, we believe that there is an intrinsic link between disarmament and development. Development is synonymous with peace. I believe that we all share a common determination to contribute to the strengthening of international peace. To that end, it is highly desirable for our States to take the road of dialogue and cooperation to settle their differences in the realm of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

As we near the end of our work, I would like to thank all delegations for their active involvement in the deliberations of Working Group I. Whatever anyone may say, the quality of statements made during our deliberations shows a high degree of professionalism on the part of delegations. This shows that expertise has hardly suffered from years of deadlock within the disarmament machinery.

I should like to pay full tribute to the members of the African Group that entrusted me with the African vice-presidency of the Disarmament Commission. I also thank the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement that supported my candidacy for the chairmanship of the Working Group. I did my duty firmly believing in the vital role of the Movement within the United Nations system. I should like also to express my gratitude to the European Union presidency, currently held by the Republic of Austria.

I wish to convey to you, Mr. Chairman, my deep personal gratitude for your unremitting attentiveness to the deliberations of Working Group I.

I would like to pay particular tribute to the invaluable contribution of Ambassador Sylvester Rowe of Sierra Leone, friend of the Chair, who placed his mastery of disarmament issues at the service of Working Group I and brought to bear his wealth of wisdom to help us forge consensus on what we managed to achieve at this session.

I would also like to thank the representatives of the Secretariat, in particular, the Department for Disarmament Affairs and its head, Under-Secretary-General Tanaka, and his associates, whose competence and readiness to help were the underpinning of our work. My thanks go also to Mr. Sergei Chernavsky and Mr. Nicolai Rogosaroff, who effectively supported us in our deliberations, as well as to their assistant, Ms. Lidija Komatina.

In conclusion, let me once again express the hope that the Disarmament Commission will survive the ongoing discussions in the General Assembly on the review of mandates — or on the Commission's proposed elimination. In this connection, let us not doubt the determination of States to make use of the deliberative framework it affords to help us make substantive progress in the two years remaining in this new triennial cycle, with a view to fully meeting the expectations of the international community by forging a consensus around crucial issues of international peace and security.

The Chairman: I thank the Chairman of Working Group I, Mr. Jean-Francis Zinsou, for his statement, from which we can certainly sense how difficult his responsibility was.

In the absence of comment, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the report of Working Group I on agenda item 4 as contained in document A/CN.10/2006/CRP.6/Rev.1.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: We turn now to the report of Working Group II, on agenda item 5, entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", as contained in document A/CN.10/2006/CRP.7. I give the floor to the Chairman of that Working Group, Mr. Carlos Duarte, to introduce the report of Working Group II.

Mr. Duarte (Brazil): Chairman of Working Group II. Working Group II, which is mandated to deal with item 5 of the Disarmament Commission's agenda, entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", held seven meetings in the period between 12 and 28 April 2006. At its first meeting, the Working Group had a general exchange of views and decided to take up a conference room paper to be prepared by me, which would update the previous Chair's consolidated working paper — the fourth revision, of 2003 — which was attached to the report of the Disarmament Commission for 2003 (A/58/42), as a basis for our discussion. Although there was general acknowledgement that the 2003 document had come close to commanding consensus at the time, it was also felt necessary to bring that text up to date. Drawing upon the views and suggestions put forward by delegations, I therefore prepared document A/CN.10/2006/WG.II/CRP.1. That document served as the basis for Working Group II's discussions during this session.

During the subsequent meetings, substantive discussions were held and both general and specific comments, ideas and proposals regarding the conference room paper were presented by many delegations. The Working Group was able to conclude a first reading of the entire conference room paper. During the course of our meetings, and based on the material presented by delegations, I prepared, with the

help of the Secretariat, two revisions of the conference room paper as well as a third, informal, revision that takes into account the work done at our last substantive meeting, which was held yesterday, 27 April, and which I intend to make available to all delegations as of 1 May.

At that same meeting yesterday, as we discussed the draft report of Working Group II to the Commission, it unfortunately became clear that the Group would not achieve consensus on the attachment of the latest version of the conference room paper, A/CN.10/2006/WG.II/CRP.1/Rev.2, to the report. Delegations nevertheless recognized that the conference room paper constituted a significant effort to reflect the state of Working Group II's discussions, and the Group decided to consider the paper as a possible basis for its work at the next session of the Disarmament Commission, in 2007.

I would like very particularly to thank you, Sir, for your support and for your tireless efforts to build consensus among delegations. I also thank delegations, in particular those of my regional group, for the confidence that they placed in me. I should also like to thank the officials of the Secretariat, and very specifically the following officers who helped me in Working Group II: Christa Giles, Pamela Maponga, Hideki Matsuno and Francine Leong.

Despite the fact that Working Group II could not reach consensus on attaching the conference room paper to its report, I believe we had a useful and productive three weeks. I wish to thank all who contributed to the debates, both in substance and in procedure. I am grateful to them, as well as to you, Sir.

I hope that, drawing on the work done this session in Working Group II, the Commission will be able to make further progress on the issue of confidence-building measures at its next session, as there clearly is much scope for agreement and many areas of convergence we can build upon. I also hope that delegations will use the time available until the next session to carefully consider the issues discussed so that work can be promptly resumed in 2007.

The Chairman: As there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the report of Working Group II, as contained in document A/CN.10/2006/CRP.7.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: Having adopted the report of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission, I would like to thank the Chairmen of the two working groups for their dedication. The Commission is deeply indebted to them for their effective leadership in guiding the deliberations of the working groups on two very complex issues.

We will now begin our consideration of the draft report of the Disarmament Commission, as contained in document A/CN.10/2006/CRP.5/Rev.1.

I have the pleasure of giving the floor to the Rapporteur of the Commission, Mr. Coly Seck of Senegal, to introduce the draft report of the Commission.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (Rapporteur): It is my honour and distinct pleasure to introduce to the Disarmament Commission the draft report of the Commission, as contained in document A/CN.10/2006/CRP.5/Rev.1.

The draft report consists of four chapters: Introduction, Organization and work of the 2006 substantive session, Documentation, and Conclusions and recommendations.

Let me now turn to the text of the report and draw the attention of delegations to the following corrections.

On page 4, in sub-paragraph 6 of paragraph 1, in the second line, two words — "namely" and "March" — should be deleted. The text would thereby read "three weeks during 2006, from 10 to 28 April".

On page 6, on the fourth line of paragraph 4, the word "member" should be inserted before the word "States". The line would thereby read "representatives of the following member States".

On page 7, the first two lines belong to the footnote from the previous page.

In the sixth line of paragraph 7 on the same page, the words from "on behalf" to "Non-Aligned Movement" should be in parentheses.

In the second line of paragraph 12 on page 8, the word "Chairman" should be in plural.

In accordance with the oral amendment presented by the United Republic of Tanzania, paragraph 7 should be amended to read "the United Republic of Tanzania" instead of "Tanzania".

In accordance with an amendment presented by Sierra Leone, the third line of paragraph 12 should read: "effectiveness of the Commission's methods of work, as well as the reports of Working Groups I and II".

Finally, there is a correction that has been made by China with regard to the reference to the working paper submitted by that country. Instead of "2003", it should read "2006".

As is customary, the final report is a factual description of the Commission's work and proceedings during the session. The substantive part comprises the two reports of the working groups that were just adopted by the Commission and which are part of the present report. That part is a reflection of the compromises and agreements reached by delegations through delicate negotiations played out in the spirit of constructive cooperation.

Despite the fact that the Commission has discussed three items at this session, no parallel meetings were held and I was privileged to closely watch the three Chairmen and delegations skilfully and step by step crafting a consensus on complex issues of the modern disarmament agenda. The two reports of the working groups, although not perfect or fully satisfactory to everybody, will serve as a good basis for further discussion. The inability to adopt the reports by consensus was due to the complexity of the issues, and not to a lack of effort on the part of delegations.

On agenda item 4, "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", I can say that it was a welcome occurrence that the dialogue on that complex issue was vigorously pursued within the framework of the Disarmament Commission. The Commission, with its deliberative mandate, allows practical and action-oriented consideration, as well as broad philosophical and conceptual approaches to the issues without negotiating pressure. From that perspective, all submitted working papers, conference room papers and oral and written comments constitute a rich background against which the Group operates.

Here, I wish to emphasize the valiant efforts of the Chairman of the Working Group. Thanks to his unfailing belief in the possibility of success and his readiness to act on his convictions, nothing was lost from that repository of ideas.

On agenda item 5, "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", a valiant effort was undertaken by the Chairman to present the Group with a non-paper right at the start of the meetings this year. Building on positive elements achieved during previous years, the Chairman took the Group down the path of steady progress. Despite differences, it was possible to find a compromise. That in itself is a major achievement that keeps the disarmament momentum alive within the Commission.

For the skilful leadership that he provided for the Working Groups, the Chairman deserves our deep gratitude. I wish to take this opportunity to say that it has been a great honour to serve as the Rapporteur at this session and, in particular, to work under the able leadership of our Chairman, Ambassador Oh Joon. It was a pleasure and an enriching experience to participate in the work of the Bureau together with the Vice-Chairmen and the Chairmen of the two Working Groups, who provided effective and expert guidance for the deliberations of the subsidiary bodies.

Finally, allow me to express my gratitude to Mr. Tanaka, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for the counsel and support that he provided to the Bureau and to member States. Let me also express my sincere appreciation to the members of the Secretariat for their tireless efforts and kind assistance. I would also like to thank the Secretary of the Commission, Mr. Timur Alasaniya, the Secretaries of the Working Groups and the members of the Disarmament Commission staff assisting the deliberations.

With those brief remarks, I recommend that the Commission adopt the draft report as contained in document A/CN.10/2006/CRP.5/Rev.1, as orally revised.

The Chairman: In addition to the revisions the Rapporteur has just mentioned, there was another revision, which came from the representative of Egypt, regarding paragraph 12 of the draft report. It will be duly reflected in the report.

Are there any comments on the draft report?

Mr. Aboul Atta (Egypt): I too would like to thank the Rapporteur of the Commission for his introduction of the draft report. Would the Chairman kindly indicate how the revision to paragraph 12 will be indicated?

The Chairman: Paragraph 12, as revised will read as follows:

> "At its 275th plenary meeting, on 28 April, the Disarmament Commission considered the draft report of the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission on measures for improving the effectiveness of the Commission's methods of work, as well as the reports of Working Groups I and II, on agenda items 4 and 5, respectively. The reports of the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission and the reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission, and the conclusions and recommendations contained therein, are included in section 4 of the present report."

The Chairman: If there are no other comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the draft report of the Disarmament Commission (A/CN.10/2006/CRP.5/Rev.1), as orally revised.

The draft report, as orally revised, was adopted.

Concluding statements

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): Let me commend you, Mr. Chairman, and the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, for your efforts and for the extraordinary patience that you have demonstrated. I think patience is part of leadership, and you demonstrated real leadership during the course of our deliberations over the past three weeks.

All of us will be reporting to our respective Governments and authorities on the proceedings and outcome of the 2006 session of the Disarmament Commission. The papers and reports that we have adopted are addressed to ourselves and our Governments. However, they will be read by others. Those others will be asking obvious questions. They will not be interested in the details of our deliberations: the number of papers that we presented, whether they were working papers or conference room papers or whether they would be attached or forwarded or submitted to the General Assembly. They will not be interested in the hours of argument over the use of definite and indefinite articles — what one could call fiddling with linguistics while the threat of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as conventional weapons, continues to threaten humankind. They will not be interested in all of that. They will not be interested in the repetitive reaffirmation of the functions of the Disarmament Commission, as if after 24 years no one knew what the Commission is all about or why it was established.

Average people, all of whom are stakeholders in the struggle for disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, will be asking: What did the 2006 Disarmament Commission session achieve? Did it advance the cause of disarmament and non-proliferation? Did it draw us closer to the ultimate objective of general and complete disarmament? Let me briefly summarize my delegation's views.

First, the fact that the Commission met at all is an achievement, considering the fact that, for almost three years, it was unable to meet because it had no agenda. This has been a landmark development for which we should applaud ourselves. I should like to pay tribute to the various delegations that contributed to the efforts to make that happen.

However, my delegation feels that that is not enough. The Commission was mandated by the General Assembly to submit a substantive report to the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. Are we doing that? My delegation, I must say, is disappointed that the Commission was unable to give due relevance, at least, to the working paper of the Chairman of Working Group I, I am referring to working paper 4, revision 1. That should have been given the importance it deserves. We gutted it, as a non-binding framework — I emphasize that phrase: non-binding framework — for the future work of the Commission. After all, we said that we are not negotiating any legally binding instrument, since this is a deliberative organ. Perhaps we should have come up with resolutions, like the First Committee.

I should like to commend the various delegations that presented papers. I said earlier — yesterday, I believe — that there were too many papers. However, while I do not want to name delegations, let me say that my delegation was impressed by the quality of the some of the papers we received during the session. They were to the point, and there were no lengthy narratives about the functions of the Commission. We know what the functions of the Commission are. The papers contained specific recommendations with which we may not agree, but at least there were recommendations made on which we could have built as the basis for our work in the coming years.

Whatever happens, whatever the political status of the papers of the Chair, of the working groups and

of member States, it is my delegation's hope that those papers will not be discarded and that we will use them as the basis of our work at the 2007 substantive session. This is the first step in a three-year cycle. We have only just begun. But we must remember that the threat to humanity that we all want to eliminate still looms large and is even increasing.

The Chairman: I am sure that I inherited my patience from the previous Chairman.

Mr. Charwath (Austria): Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the European Union (EU), I would like to thank you very much and congratulate you on your able guidance and the stewardship that you have provided throughout the proceedings of this session of the Disarmament Commission.

I would also like to thank, through you, the Chairmen of both working groups for their excellent work and for the great efforts they made under very difficult circumstances. The EU very much appreciates their personal engagement and their sincere efforts to bring our work forward. Let me here also add a word of thanks to Ambassador Rowe in his capacity as a friend of the Chair and informal friend of the Chair of Working Group I, at some point. Together, under your leadership, we have been able to agree on some additional measures to improve the working methods of the Commission, and we hope that they will help in that respect.

We did set out at the beginning to restart our discussions after a two-year break in our substantive proceedings due to a lack of agreement on an agenda. In that sense we did get ahead, because we did certainly talk, and a number of issues came up during our discussions.

The European Union has said on previous occasions that we would like the Disarmament Commission to fulfil its important role as the sole universal membership body dealing with disarmament issues — except for the First Committee — to discuss and come up with concrete recommendations. I have to say, though, that given the way that our discussions have gone in the past few weeks, we are not fully convinced that we have achieved that yet.

We will meet again next year, in 2007, to continue our discussions, and we very much hope that we will be able to make progress then. I wish to thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for your work, as well as the Secretariat, the interpreters and everyone else who helped us, sometimes working late, even after hours, and everyone else who contributed to this debate.

Mr. Benítez Versón (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation would like to convey to you, Mr. Chairman, our sincere congratulations on the outstanding manner in which you have been guiding the work of the Commission during this session. Let me also congratulate the Chairmen of Working Groups I and II, who showed unending patience, great professionalism and a deep commitment to their very difficult tasks.

Concerning Working Group I, with regard to the item on "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", my delegation believes that the documents submitted by the Chairman contain certain elements that are invaluable indeed and that Cuba supports fully.

Cuba views the issue of nuclear disarmament as having, now and in future, the highest priority in the field of disarmament, until such day that such weapons have vanished from the face of the earth or been forever banned.

However, we should like to note that the documents prepared by the Chairman of Working Group I contain other elements that my delegation does not support. In that connection, we should like explicitly to place on record our reservations as to paragraph 19 of document A/CN.10/2006/WG.I/CRP.1 and Rev.1*. That paragraph states that the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSE) and the Global Threat Reduction Initiative enjoy full support. However, that is not the case at all.

I should like to reiterate that Cuba, along with other countries, does not support the initiative. In fact, my delegation has, in various forums, submitted working documents detailing our stance on the PSE. We believe that that initiative, promoted outside the framework of the United Nations, contains elements that are inconsistent with the principles of international law.

With regard to Working Group II, my delegation regrets that, owing to the position of one delegation, the text prepared by the Chairman (A/CN.10/2006/CRP.1/Rev.2) is not annexed to the Group's report. We hope that that document, together

with the comments and proposals on it presented by delegations — including the delegation of Cuba — will be used as a basis for discussion when our work resumes in 2007.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Cuba's full support for the Disarmament Commission, a body that has an extremely relevant role in the United Nations disarmament machinery. The mere fact that we have a body in which we can deliberate in depth on disarmament issues that have important implications for all Member States is very illustrative of the Commission's usefulness.

I must say that Cuba listened with much concern to the statement made in the General Assembly by a powerful State member of the Commission earlier this week during the discussions taking place in the context of the mandates review process. That State characterized the Disarmament Commission as an obsolete, irrelevant body and proposed its elimination. I wish to place clearly on record Cuba's position against that proposal. We will firmly maintain that position in the General Assembly's discussions on the mandates review.

I would like to conclude by once again thanking you, Mr. Chairman, the other members of the Bureau, the Chairmen of the Working Groups and the Secretariat team for the good work accomplished.

Mr. Soemirat (Indonesia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

First, allow me to express our gratitude and appreciation to you, Mr. Chairman, for your able and effective leadership in steering the work of the Disarmament Commission this year. The NAM countries continue to underscore the importance of the Commission and of other multilateral disarmament mechanisms in dealing with questions of disarmament and related international security issues. It is imperative to consider the Commission as a forum for balanced and comprehensive deliberation on those issues, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter. In our opinion, it is also important that all delegations continue the process of such deliberation at the next session of the Commission, in 2007.

Through you, Mr. Chairman, let me also thank the other members of the Bureau, especially the Chairmen of Working Groups I and II, and the Secretary of the Committee and his staff for all their hard work and cooperation during our exercise this year.

Finally, the Non-Aligned Movement remains committed to promoting international security and peace through disarmament measures. That is why we believe that multilateralism remains the only sustainable way to address disarmament and international security issues. It is our hope that multilateralism within the United Nations framework will provide the impetus needed to move the disarmament agenda forward in our future endeavours.

Mr. Prins (Netherlands): Let me try to add a few words of realism.

My delegation has found this year's session of the Disarmament Commission to be largely superfluous; it has shown again that agreeing on an agenda does not in any way mean that progress can be achieved. We find that meetings such as these come close to being an insult to our taxpayers. Let me stress that that is in no way due to a lack of effort on your part, Mr. Chairman, on the part of the other Chairs and friends of the Chair, or on the part of the Secretariat.

The Netherlands attaches and will continue to attach great importance to disarmament and non-proliferation. At the same time, we will, in the coming year, consider our presence at next year's session of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Minami (Japan): I would like to join other delegations in expressing our deepest gratitude to you, Mr. Chairman; to Mr. Zinsou and Mr. Duarte, the Chairmen of Working Group I and Working Group II, respectively; and to Ambassador Rowe, who was a friend of the Chair in the discussion on working methods. My delegation believes that, because of your good guidance and competence, we were able to reach consensus on additional measures for improvement of our work, and our deliberations got off to a very good start and have produced a good basis for our deliberations next year and the year thereafter. We express once again our appreciation for your tireless and productive endeavours in carrying out those difficult tasks.

Mr. Zhang Xiaohong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): On behalf of the Chinese delegation, I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the Chairmen of

the two Working Groups for the successful completion of our session this year.

I would like to reiterate that China has always attached importance to the role and the status of the Disarmament Commission. We would be pleased to work together with all other members to ensure that the Commission can make a greater contribution to the process of advancing the cause of arms control and disarmament and thereby enhancing peace and stability.

We wish to assure the Commission that we will carefully study the document submitted by the Chairman and the working papers submitted by delegations. We believe that they will form a good basis for our deliberations next year.

Mr. Luaces (United States of America): Our delegation would like to thank the representatives of Benin, Brazil and Sierra Leone and, of course, you, Mr. Chairman, for your dedicated efforts to guide the work of the Commission during the past three weeks. We also wish to acknowledge the important contributions of our colleagues in the Secretariat, particularly on those occasions when they continued to work as one or another Working Group ran beyond its allotted time.

As delegations know well, Mr. Chairman, diplomacy is a political exercise. In that context, your able service deserves special mention. Multilateral disarmament endeavours need more individuals such as yourself — practical, realistic dealmakers — and could do with far fewer would-be lay theologians, that is, those enraptured with every jot and tittle of every disarmament-related text, statement and proclamation since the cooling of the Earth. It is such rigid zeal, not the lack of so-called political will, that is slowly but surely destroying the ability of multilateral disarmament institutions to fulfil their important functions. Those bodies also are under threat by radical regimes that cynically manipulate and abuse those organizations for their own devious ends.

Our delegation regrets the fact that the Asian Group, with dozens of member States, could identify no Government other than the Islamic Republic of Iran for the so-called Asian seat in the Bureau of the Commission. The United States went along with that Kakfaesque absurdity in the interest of consensus and because, frankly, the Commission's international reputation did not merit a major fuss. Nonetheless, it remains on the record that the Commission — a body supposed to promote nuclear disarmament, among other issues — elected, as one of its Vice-Chairmen, a Government which the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has on numerous occasions found to be out of compliance with both its IAEA and Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) obligations.

Indeed, the IAEA Board of Governors in February reported Iran's non-compliance with its Treaty obligations to the Security Council, and Mr. ElBaradei's report to the Security Council today confirmed that Iran continues to refuse to comply with the steps required under the February IAEA decision and the presidential statement issued by the Council on 29 March.

Statements this week by senior Iranian officials, reflected in the activities of Iran's delegation in this body over the past three weeks, indicate continuing defiance by Tehran of the will of the international community. This is unacceptable behaviour by a rogue regime.

Our delegation takes this opportunity to urge the Iranian regime, even at this eleventh hour, to reverse course and return to compliance with its Treaty obligations, in the interests of international peace and security. Among other actions, Iran must undertake a complete suspension of all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities and provide the IAEA with the extended transparency and cooperation that the Board of Governors has repeatedly requested.

Beyond that, the Disarmament Commission has had a poor record since 2000. The Commission did not meet at all in 2002, failed to adopt consensual recommendations in 2003, failed to adopt an agenda in 2004, and finally adopted an agenda only in December 2005. Delegations this year began to address the agreed agenda topics. Regrettably, however, consensus continues to elude us.

That absence of consensus has been most apparent in Working Group I, where far too many representatives continue to promote falsehoods and failed nostrums dating back decades to a cold war that no longer exists. Our delegation continues to believe that international cooperation on disarmament in all its forms cannot be enhanced before States Members of the United Nations can agree to set aside past differences and determine to work together to address

modern threats to international peace and security. Chief among those, of course, is the immediate and urgent threat posed by rogue States and terrorist organizations seeking to acquire nuclear weapons and related delivery systems and technologies.

As our delegation stated at the first meeting of Working Group I, achieving effective nuclear non-proliferation in today's world is the essential element for establishing the international security conditions necessary for the effective pursuit of nuclear disarmament. We hope that, upon review of the divergent proposals submitted in Working Group I, Governments will reflect and make the right decisions concerning the future direction of our deliberations on the nuclear agenda item.

Our delegation was disappointed in the fact that the same delegation that blocked consensus on the conventional issue in 2003 chose to compound the damage this year by again proposing measures that clearly do not enjoy consensus within this body — disappointed, of course, but not surprised, since our delegation, since 2004, had predicted publicly that a decision by the Commission to return to this subject would result in the outcome that we have witnessed here this year.

We regret that Non-Aligned delegations in particular did not have the vision to support alternative proposals for the conventional item during 2004 and 2005, such as those circulated by the United States, the European Union and other Governments. In hindsight, we can only recall the wisdom of the observation made by the delegation of India just three weeks ago that the 2003 draft document on conventional confidence-building measures contained many political compromises that would not withstand wholesale efforts at amendment this year.

That said, member States will have a year to review the current draft text to determine whether it can be salvaged or whether it would be best to return to the drawing board.

Our delegation remains grateful that the Disarmament Commission agreed last year to endorse the proposal made by our Government that the Commission review its internal workings to see if they could be improved. In candor, however, too many delegations seemed unwilling to move beyond decision 52/492.

In joining consensus on the related draft recommendations, our delegation can only hope that, if they are adopted by the General Assembly, they will have a salutary effect on the Disarmament Commission, as resolutions 58/41 and 59/95 — both initiatives of our Government — have had on the methods of work of the First Committee.

Finally, our delegation wishes to call attention to an important development with potential implications for the future of this body. Earlier this week, a resolution was submitted in the United States Senate that calls for the United States to withdraw from the Commission and to withhold further payments to the United Nations in its support. Our delegation obviously cannot speculate on the prospects for passage of that legislation, but we would observe that the activities of the Disarmament Commission finally appear to have captured the attention of the United States Congress, and not in a good way, from the Commission's perspective. In sum, it has taken member States three years to arrive at this moment. Capitals will now need to reflect on whether those efforts, and our activities here this year, merit continued pursuit, or if the Disarmament Commission finally has outlived its usefulness.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to begin by placing on record our sincere gratitude to you for the diplomatic skill, transparency and integrity that you demonstrated in the course of this session of the Disarmament Commission. Let me also associate my delegation with other delegations in expressing our thanks to the Chairs of the Working Groups. It was a pleasure and an honour for my delegation to work with you, Sir, in the Bureau.

We regret that the Working Groups, despite the will of the overwhelming majority of member States to attach papers by the Chairs to the reports of the Groups, were unable to attach such working papers to their reports due to the opposition of the United States delegation.

It is no wonder that the United States has been trying, and is still trying, to create smokescreens in this meeting and in others to deflect attention from its abysmal record on nuclear disarmament. When in 1995 a consensus was achieved around the principles and objectives governing the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

(NPT), it was based on a solemn undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to pursue systematic efforts to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons. States parties were assured that from that point on accountability would be the cornerstone of the NPT.

Allow me to briefly give a few examples of non-compliance with the NPT by the United States, which is now the self-proclaimed champion of compliance. The United States has adopted a Nuclear Posture Review which incorporates a breach of its obligations on irreversibility, on the diminished role of nuclear weapons and on lowering the operational status of nuclear weapons. It has done this by: stressing the essential role of nuclear weapons as an effective tool for achieving security ends and foreign policy objectives; developing new nuclear weapons systems and constructing new facilities for producing nuclear weapons; resuming efforts to develop and deploy tactical nuclear weapons despite the commitment to reverse that process and effectively reduce the numbers of such weapons; and targeting non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT and planning to attack those States.

The United States has replaced the principle of destruction — perceived as the most fundamental element in the process of nuclear disarmament — with a policy of decommissioning. The United States has abrogated the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty), recognized by the international community as the cornerstone of global strategic stability, through its unilateral withdrawal from the Treaty. The United States continues the deployment of nuclear forces in other territories, raising serious concerns about the command and control of such weapons; this constitutes a clear violation of article I of the NPT.

The United States has continued to provide a nuclear umbrella for non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT — a flagrant violation of articles I and II of the NPT by the United States and by countries hosting such weaponry. In 2000, the United States signed an agreement on nuclear cooperation with Israel, whose nuclear arsenal presents the gravest danger to the peace and stability of the Middle East, providing Israeli scientists access to its nuclear facilities, thereby demonstrating its total disregard for its obligations under the NPT.

The United States has rejected the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), not only damaging the prospects for the entry into force of the Treaty but also undermining the promotion and upholding of the CTBT in international forums.

Last but not least, the United States has rejected the inclusion of the element of verifiability in a future fissile materials cut-off treaty, thereby breaching a long-standing consensus position of the international community on a negotiating mandate in the Conference on Disarmament.

The NPT remains the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the ability to develop and pursue nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The three pillars of the NPT — nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the ability to pursue the peaceful use of nuclear energy — are intertwined. They need to be followed together, without diminishing the significance and effectiveness of any one pillar compared with the others.

Above all, the Commission should pay attention to the following areas: ensuring the full universality of the NPT without a single exception; rejecting any perception or policy anywhere in the world which puts forward nuclear weapons as a means of achieving individual and collective security; strengthening collective and coordinated efforts to check proliferation, vertical or horizontal; improving safeguards and supporting the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in its supervision of nuclear activities; emphasizing security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States, thereby removing concerns about a nuclear threat; and enabling States parties to exercise their full right to develop and produce nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under appropriate international monitoring and supervision.

The vice-chairmanship of the Islamic Republic of Iran was endorsed by 45 countries of the Asian Group, for which we are very thankful. Those 45 independent countries are politically mature and wise enough to recognize what is appropriate for them. They do not need somebody outside of the region dictating to them what to do. The Commission, on the first day of this substantive session, respected the decision of the Asian Group and decided to elect the Islamic Republic of Iran as a Vice-Chair of the Commission, as reflected in the official records of the Commission (see A/CN.10/PV.269). It seems that it has become the habit

of the United States first to accept a decision in an international forum and then to refuse to comply with it.

If anything is wrong with the Bureau of the Commission, it is the election of Israel — a threat to peace and security for the peoples of the Middle East — as a member of the Bureau of the Disarmament Commission over the years. Israel has already violated every single Security Council resolution that has been adopted about the Middle East. It has constantly refused to denounce nuclear weapons and to sign the NPT.

It is worth mentioning that the only existing obstacle to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is the non-adherence of Israel to the NPT and its continued clandestine operation of unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, with the help and technological assistance of the United States. Israel has paid no attention to the constant international calls in different forums, particularly the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which called upon that regime by name to accede to the NPT immediately and without condition. The Israeli regime has never been a party to the international instruments on weapons of mass destruction — the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Israeli nuclear threat and its missile capability are a real threat to the peace and stability of the region and the world.

While we have those concerns, we respect the decision of the respective regional groups, unlike the United States delegation. But it seems that the United States double standards have become even worse and changed into double discriminatory standards, according to which a State party with peaceful nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards, and which has accepted 2,000 inspector-days of inspection and is a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, cannot become a Vice-Chair of the Disarmament Commission, but a delegation that has never been a party to the international instruments on weapons of mass destruction and continues to operate nuclear weapons facilities clandestinely is suitable for such a post.

As for Iran, it is committed to the NPT and the non-proliferation regime and will spare no effort in that regard.

I would like to draw the Commission's atte to some of the reports of the IAEA that clearly me the non-diversion of Iranian activities. The va reports issued by the IAEA Director-General November 2003 have confirmed that "To date, th no evidence that the previously undeclared nu material and activities ... were related to a nu weapons programme" (*GOV/2003/75, para. 52*). same conclusion can be found in the IAEA's Feb report. Paragraph 53 of that report repeats the IA previous conclusion that, "As indicated to the Boa November 2004, and again in September 2005, a declared nuclear material in Iran has been acco for" (*GOV/2006/15*). Even today's report of the I reaffirms that conclusion. The Agency reaffirms again in paragraph 53 of the February 2006 repor it "has not seen any diversion of nuclear materi nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive device

Let me conclude my remarks by thanking again, Sir, for your patience and by thanking Chairmen of the working groups for their patience dedication.

The Chairman: I would like to re representatives that, in subsidiary bodies of the Ge Assembly like ours, the usual suggested time lim seven minutes. I would appreciate it if representa could abide by that.

Mr. Hashmi (Pakistan): I promise you, Sir, t will be through within a minute.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank as well as the two Chairs of the working groups your hard work and sincere efforts. I would also li thank the Secretariat for a very good job.

My delegation is obliged to respond t comment addressed to us. I would just like to note it was our delegation which presented a paper in 2 and another paper this year. We presented it in g faith. It has been commented upon and sev elements of it have been taken on board in the re We recognize the right of every delegation to disa with any of the comments or any of the working pa presented by any member of this Commission, bu find it interesting and regrettable that one delega has also presented a working paper which is full number of proposals that are difficult, to put it mi for a number of delegations in the Disarma Commission.

I just thought I would note the discrepancy that, while one delegation is characterized as not being helpful to the work of the Commission, at the same time another chooses to present one paper which is full of the same difficulties.

Mr. Luaces (United States of America): Our delegation would like briefly to comment on some of the remarks just delivered by the representative of Iran.

Obviously, there is a lot on which we differ and there are some issues on which we shall not comment because that Government has the right to hold its national positions, as we do our own. But there are some statements that are not true, and when it comes to issues that are related to nuclear affairs, as our delegation stated before the first main committee of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) last year, when Governments or individual representatives make certain assertions, they are either ignorant of the facts or are liars.

In that regard, we would like to comment on some of the following remarks.

The United States has stated publicly and repeatedly — most recently at last year's NPT Review Conference, barely 11 months ago, in this room — that the United States does not target any non-nuclear-weapon State. We also made clear during our presentation at that time that the activities of the United States with our partners in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization were debated at the time that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was adopted. All Governments were aware of that and the activities in which we participate are perfectly legal within the Treaty and therefore do not violate articles I and II, as asserted by Iran.

With regard to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), we take this opportunity to reiterate our position that the United States opposes the Treaty and will not become a party to it. We remind delegations that the only reason that the CTBT Organization's Preparatory Committee exists is because the United States voluntarily participates in 95 per cent of the activities of the international monitoring system, to which we pay in excess of $20 million a year, accounting for 22 per cent of that budget. Any time that delegations would like us to leave their pristine organization to themselves, I cannot speak exactly for the United States Government, but I suspect that all delegations would need to do is ask.

What else? There is just so much. Ah, yes; let us talk about the vice-chairmanship.

The Vice-Chairman talks about our having dictated. Obviously, we did not dictate, because you got elected. We did not object. We have not made a motion during the three weeks. And there you are sitting with your nice Vice-Chairman placard in front of your desk. So feel free to take the floor again; you are just going to look like a fool. We have not interfered in this.

In so far as the statement that Israel is the only obstacle to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, everyone knows that that is not a factual statement. I shall not belabour it.

Double discrimination standards .... That is enough. We just do not have time to deal with that kind of stuff.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I apologize for taking the floor. I would just like to respond to at least one of the claims of the United States delegation regarding not threatening or targeting non-nuclear-weapon States.

In that regard, on Tuesday, 18 April 2006 — very recently — in a question-and-answer session in the White House, on being asked whether United States options regarding Iran "include the possibility of a nuclear strike" and whether his Administration is planning for such a prospect, President George W. Bush refused to rule out a United States nuclear strike on Iran. Instead he replied, "all options are on the table".

Such dangerous statements, in particular at this time, are widely considered, in political and media circles, as tacit confirmation of the shocking news of the Administration's possible contemplation of nuclear strikes against a non-nuclear-weapon State, namely Iran.

Mr. Itzchaki (Israel): In fact, my delegation did not plan to take the floor, or at least, it planned to take the floor just to begin by thanking you, Mr. Chairman, for your able guidance, as well as the Chairmen of Working Groups I and II.

When we stood here three weeks ago, at the point of departure, we were encouraged by the fact that this body had begun to deal with more interesting subjects — at least in the opinion of my delegation — particularly in Working Group I, where we were to deal, for the first time, with the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, which is dear to our delegation and our State, in view of the current and emerging threats. We were also encouraged by, and willing to participate constructively in, the debate on confidence-building measures, as we view them as part of the possible ways ultimately to achieve peace and security, which is the final goal of any disarmament process.

We would also like to extend our special thanks to Ambassador Sylvester Rowe of Sierra Leone, who made a magnificent effort — which was fruitful in the end — to try to bridge gaps and successfully adopt a report.

I could have ended my statement just like that, as well, of course, as by thanking the members of the Secretariat, who have provided a lot of guidance during these three weeks.

However, unfortunately, I cannot end my statement there, in view of some accusations that have been made against my State and people. In fact, we are not surprised that this is turning into a forum that again accuses Israel for many, many things that it has never done.

Let me begin by saying that Israel supports the First Committee's resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, notwithstanding the many reservations we have on that resolution, because we support the eventual establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We believe that we can support that resolution; we are part of the consensus on it. So there is no doubt that Israel is also committed to the eventual establishment of that zone.

However, the unfortunate reality is that we live in a neighbourhood and region in which the President of Iran is still daily calling for the destruction of my country — for wiping Israel from the map — instigating terrorism and denying the Holocaust. That certainly does not bring us closer to even beginning to consider the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Added to that are Iran's violations and the defiant way in which it reacts to all international demands set out by the Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency's Boar of Governors.

It is not Israel that is painting that picture. That acknowledged by the international community.

Finally, we are again not surprised that Iran trying to deflect the main focus of the internationa community from the real problem. The real problem Iran's emerging threat to international peace an security arising from its nuclear programme. I thin that, aside from Iran, no other delegation here convinced that Iran is looking towards peace. Th evidence speaks for itself.

Once again, trying to use common Unite Nations practices of being elected to a chairmanshi and calling them absurd or audacious, is certainly no worthy of any reaction from my country. In a way, tha again serves to question the validity of th Disarmament Commission, whether it is just anothe forum for exchanges of accusations aimed at on country, like Israel.

The Chairman: I know everyone is taking th floor to compliment the Chairman. I can tell you that am flattered and that I need no more compliment Under-Secretary-General Tanaka needs to speak befor 6 p.m., and I need to my make my concluding remark before 6 p.m. I would therefore like to appeal t members to make their statements short.

Mr. Luaces (United States of America): In th interest of brevity, I would like to comment briefly o semantic distinctions.

The statement about what the President said o 18 April is somehow equated with Columbus discovering the New World. The United States is ver consistent about this. There is another less-reported about statement of 18 April by the President of Iran i his speech marking Army Day, in which he talke about "cut off the hand of any aggressor and place th sign of disgrace on their forehead". Not very peace loving. More to the point, we recall for delegations th 13 April statement "Be angry at us and die of th anger". Finally, we recall the closing remark made b the delegation of Iran, in its first statement thi afternoon, about how that Government spares no effo to promote nuclear non-proliferation. Given you record, on behalf of the international community please spare us your effort.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. Chairman, you and the other members of the Commission all witnessed that it was not the delegation of Iran that started this political discussion and dispute; it was the United States delegation, which would like to misuse each and every opportunity in order to pursue its political objectives, even through a multilateral forum.

In the past 250 years, Iran has never threatened any other country. A number of remarks, taken out of context and misused in politically motivated propaganda supported by the United States and Israel, are baseless and are used as a means to pursue a hidden agenda of those two regimes.

The Chairman: Believe it or not, we still have another agenda item left, item 7, "Other business". Does any delegation wish to speak on this item? I see none.

I now give the floor to Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

Mr. Tanaka (Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs): I believe I would be less than candid if I did not characterize this session as a very difficult one. After a long impasse, we came to the stage of holding this session of the Disarmament Commission. I think that that is a good thing. After all, the objectives of disarmament and non-proliferation are very long-term in nature, and progress is very slow. This is a deliberative body, and it is good when Member States listen to the views of other Member States. Moreover, it is an encouraging, albeit small, step for the Commission to recommend some measures for improving the efficiency of its working methods. I hope that that will be a good catalyst for further meaningful deliberations of the Commission in the future.

I must say that it is not easy to restore lost trust and lost confidence among Member States, which ruptured the two important occasions last year. Clearly, I still see some difficulties in moving the disarmament agenda forward in the future. Yet my Department is totally committed to serving the members of the Commission as they guide us. We stand ready to help in any direction that they would like to pursue.

Last but not least, I cannot end my remarks without saying how grateful we are to the Chairman; to the Chairmen of Working Groups I and II, Mr. Zinsou of Benin and Mr. Duarte of Brazil; and to the friend of the Chair, Ambassador Sylvester Rowe, for their tireless efforts to ensure that this Commission remains a coherent body. I am particularly grateful for their admirable stewardship of the Commission. Thanks to them, we have successfully maintained a certain coherence in the Commission thus far. Once again, I thank them for their guidance. We stand ready to help them in any direction that they would like to pursue in the very difficult and yet lofty objective of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Chairman: Distinguished delegates: before closing this session, I should like to share with you some of my personal thoughts regarding my chairmanship over the past three weeks.

First of all, I would like to thank all of you for having worked so hard and earnestly for the past three weeks to find common ground on the extremely difficult, but also tremendously important, issues we are dealing with. Indeed, disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are quintessential questions that affect all of us and therefore require common endeavours on our part to address them.

Whether we like it or not, and wherever we stand on these issues, none of us can avoid the realities we are facing: the reality that we have stockpiles of weapons that can kill all of us many times over; the reality that, regardless of the size of our arsenals, the money spent on weapons could feed countless starving people; the reality that we try to build up our own military power while asking others to reduce theirs; the reality that we are moving towards a more dangerous world as more and more of us acquire more powerful weapons; and the reality that we are often frustrated because we cannot do much about any of those realities.

However, I believe that our efforts in this Commission are all the more important because of those realities, not despite them. As we continue to discuss disarmament and non-proliferation, we play an important role as a constant reminder of the realities that the international community has to face. It would be even better if we could reach full agreement on how to deal with these critical issues. But even without such an agreement, the discussions we have and the efforts we make to narrow the gaps among us are invaluable.

Especially at this session, I am glad that we made progress — albeit modest progress — in our work. We were able to agree on new measures to improve our working methods, and the consideration of our two agenda items formed a good basis on which to continue our work in 2007 and 2008. I am sure that the credit for those achievements should go to all representatives for their sincere spirit and constructive work.

My heartfelt thanks go to the two Working Group Chairs, Mr. Zinsou and Mr. Duarte, who volunteered to take up those tough responsibilities from the beginning and who spared no effort in moving our deliberations forward. I would also like to express my deep appreciation to the friend of the Chair, Ambassador Sylvester Rowe of Sierra Leone, for his great contribution to our work, based on the wisdom and expertise gained during his chairmanship of the Commission. I further thank all the members of the Bureau for their contribution to the work of the Commission.

Under-Secretary-General Nobuaki Tanaka, despite the fact that he arrived at the United Nations only recently, has been extremely active in his interest and participation in the work of the Commission. On behalf of the Commission, I extend to him our sincerest appreciation.

Finally, I wish to thank the members of the Secretariat for their hard work and professionalism, in particular the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management team, led by Mr. Timur Alasaniya, and the Department for Disarmament Affairs team, led by Mr. Ioan Tudor, as well as the interpreters, conference officers and documents officers. I wish them all the best in their future work.

Closure of the session

The Chairman: I declare closed the 2006 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.